1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
FF38 Katab FF38



Nje[1] horsemen, and owing to this circumstance they derived their nickname of *Bin shio* or relatives of flying ants. It will be observed that the clan titles are nowadays believed to have been derived from the names borne by the reputed founders of the clan, but there is evidence that some at least of the clan titles were formerly place names.

*Clan Emblems and Taboos.*—Some of the Katab clans have, as we shall see, certain animal or plant taboos, but these do not appear to be closely associated with the system of clan exogamy or to play a prominent part in maintaining the sense of relationship between the members of the clan. We have seen that the Aku bear the nickname of "flying ants" and, although the flying ant is not an Aku emblem, we are reminded of Andrew Lang's view that totems were originally sobriquets. It does not appear that the Aku have any general taboo other than the male shea tree (*nensham*). This tree may be cut down, but its wood may not be used for burning. If an Aku were to eat food cooked over a fire in which *nensham* wood had been used his body would become covered with sores. The leaves of this tree are used as a taboo, and no Aku woman would dare enter a house if the owner had placed a bunch of *nensham* leaves at the door.

The Agbat clan respects the crocodile (*tsang*). It is their friend and brother (*nanyuk*) and on it oaths are sworn. An Agbat, it is said, can play unharmed with a crocodile in the water. If he sees its dead body he hastily retreats, or buries it. He will not even touch a piece of crocodile skin. If he kills a crocodile by accident he must hurry off to the forest for some special medicine; if he kills it by design the entire clan will, it is believed, perish. The reason assigned for this association is that once in ancient times the Katab were flying from their enemies and came to an unfordable river. Crocodiles formed a bridge for the Agbat, but swam away when the other Katab clans tried to cross by the same means. An Agbat can frighten a crocodile by merely calling out the name of some other clan

[1] A variant account says that Agbat and his people were out hunting and came across the men of Shokwa who were performing certain religious rites. As Agbat passed them his horse's hoof made a hole in the ground, and out of this hole sprang Aku. Aku joined in the religious dance of the Shokwa, and was immediately acclaimed as a brother. There is a curious parallel to this story given in Hutton's *The Sema Nagas*, p. 124. Mr. Hutton says: "The Asimi abstain from eating winged ants. The reason given is that their first ancestors emerged from the earth."

1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
FF38 Katab FF38



than his own. There does not appear to be any belief nowadays that an Agbat, on dying, turns into a crocodile, but it was stated that when an old Agbat man dies his friends sing: "The water is all astir—the crocodile is entering." An Agbat woman does not cease to respect the crocodile on her marriage, and it was said that the son of an Agbat woman, though he takes his exogamic unit from his father, shows respect to his mother's totem as well as to his father's. The Agbat also, apparently, respect the leopard. If an Agbat kills a leopard he is required by custom to perform certain rites designed to protect him from the ghost of the dead animal. He sends a friend or relative to a neighbouring tribe (Kagoro) for medicine, some of which he drinks and some of which he smears on his body. He will not eat leopard's flesh or wear a leopard's skin. The reason now assigned for this respect is that once in bygone days an Agbat ate leopard's flesh and his body became covered with boils. The conception of non-respect for a totem causing boils is common and is also found in other parts of the world (e.g. among the Melanesians of New Guinea). The Agbat do not call themselves "Leopards", but they state that in battle they were always put in the van, and as they rushed forward they shouted "We are leopards; we cannot run away".

The Shokwa clan respect the *tatong*, one of the lizard family. The association of the *tatong* with the Shokwa clan was begun, it is said, in the following way. Shokwa, the founder of the clan, was sitting alone in his house lighting a fire. A *tatong*, hearing the noise, came and spoke to Shokwa, asking who he was and where were his relatives. Shokwa replied that he had no relatives, and the *tatong* then assured him that God would increase his family. This prophecy came true, and Shokwa ordered all his children to respect the *tatong* for all time. And so no man of Shokwa may injure a *tatong*, and if he finds one he takes it to the priestly head of the Kuzat family who houses it in a granary, feeds it with beniseed and finally releases it with blessings. For the Shokwa regard the *tatong* as a relative, and if they find the body of a dead *tatong* will cover it with earth reverently, holding a funeral feast as they would for one of their old men. Should a Shokwa man kill a *tatong* accidentally rain would fall, even in the middle of the dry season. The most binding oath a Shokwa can

1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
FF38 Katab FF38



614 make is by the *tatong*. The respect shown by the Shokwa
784 is shared by all the Katab clans, and any member of another
825 clan living near Shokwa who accidentally killed a *tatong* would take its body to Shokwa for burial. The Shokwa people do not, however, call themselves by the name of their emblem animal. On the contrary, the *tatong's* name is taboo.

614 The Aswen subdivision of Minyam respects a certain large
784 tree at Kibori. This tree is known as " the husband of Aswen ",
824 and rites are regularly performed at its base. There was formerly another tree of the same species at Kibori, which was the original object of worship and was known as " the mother of Aswen ". It was destroyed by fire some forty years ago, and it is said
[766] that as it fell it gave a mighty shout. The whole of the Aswen sub-clan assembled, and a funeral feast was held with beer-drinking, dancing, and music (horn band), and the death of the tree was lamented as that of some great chief. The grove round the remaining tree is taboo. No one may enter it with an axe, and every November at harvest first-fruit rites are performed at the base of the tree. The space round the tree is cleared.
[782] The headman of Aswen leads the procession of grown-up men, and when they come to the tree all kneel down and salute it twice by touching the ground and then the forehead. The head of the sub-clan offers a petition to the tree for the welfare of the clan and then smears the trunk with a porridge made from new millet (*digitaria*) and pours libations of beer. These rites are performed in the evening, and a dance and feast follow and are kept up until the following night. No female or young person is allowed to approach the vicinity of the tree. The sub-clan does not respect all trees of the same species, and we cannot, therefore, regard the particular tree as a totem, though the title " Mother of Aswen " would suggest that the sub-clan regard the tree as its ancestor. Possibly we have here an instance of a totem in the making, so that in time all trees of the species will become sacred to the Aswen.

*Sub-clans and Kindreds.*—The principal clans, viz. Minyam
613 and Agbat, have subdivisions which may be described as sub-clans,
583 the characteristic feature of the sub-clan being that it constitutes a wife-stealing unit *vis-à-vis* any other sub-clan of the same clan. The sub-clan appears to have come into existence by a
[616] process of fission which in the first instance resulted in a dual